

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

This application claims priority to JP-2003-292434 filed August 12, 2003. The Claim for Priority and certified copy of the priority document were filed in the Patent Office on December 9, 2003, and are viewable in the Image File Wrapper on the Patent Office's PAIR website. The Examiner is kindly requested to acknowledge Applicant's claim for priority and that the certified copy of the priority document has been received by marking Boxes 12(a)(1) in the next Patent Office communication.

Claims 1-14 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended, and claims 3 and 14 are rewritten to be in independent form. Support for the amendment to claim 1 can be found, for example, in paragraphs [0054], [0078], and [0085] of the published specification. No new matter is added.

Applicant appreciates Examiner Rahmjoo's indication that Claims 3-9 and 14 recite allowable subject matter, and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. As discussed above, claims 3 and 14 are rewritten to be in independent form including all of the features of base claim 1. Thus, claims 3-9 and 14 are allowable.

The Office Action objects to the specification. The Office Action asserts that "a dot region determination portion" is recited in line 9 of claim 1 and not found in the specification. Claim 1 recites "a dot region determining portion" in line 9. This term can be found, for example, in line 10 of paragraph [0054] of the specification. Thus, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-14 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, because of informalities. Claims 1 and 14 are amended to correct the informalities in response to the rejection. The recited "center pixels of isolated dots" originally in line three of claim 3 is introduced for the first time in claim 3. Thus, there is no antecedent basis issue with respect to claim 3. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1 and 10-13 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Suzuki, U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0081031 A1. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 recites an image processing apparatus including, *inter alia*, an isolated dot discriminating portion judging, for each pixel of a plurality of pixels included in an image, whether the pixel is a center pixel of an isolated dot.

Suzuki discloses a half tone dot internal character region signal generating section 33 that discriminates a halftone dot internal character region from other types of regions (see Fig. 2 and paragraph [0094]). The half tone dot internal character region signal generating section 33 includes an isolation point counting section 76 and an OR circuit 75 (see Fig. 14 and paragraph [0094]). The Office Action asserts that the isolation point counting section 76 corresponds to the claimed isolated dot discriminating portion. Suzuki discloses that the isolation point counting section 76 counts the number of isolation points that exist in the 11x11 pixel matrix region (see paragraph [0095]). The isolation points are alleged by the Office Action to correspond to the claimed isolated dot. In particular, Suzuki discloses that a signal indicative of whether an isolation point exists relevant to each pixel is inputted from the OR circuit 75 to the isolation point counting section 76, and the signal is held by

an 11x11 pixel matrix whose center is a target pixel (see paragraph [0095]). The pixels corresponding to the isolation point ("isolated dot") are then counted by the isolation point counting section 76 (see paragraph [0095]). That is, the isolation point counting section 76 simply counts the number of isolation points ("isolated dots") that exist in the 11x11 pixel matrix region. The isolation point counting section 76 does not judge, for each pixel of a plurality of pixels included in an image, whether the pixel is a center pixel of an isolation point.

Furthermore, Suzuki does not teach or suggest the combination of claim 1 that includes a size detector detecting an isolated dot size. The Office Action indicates that this element is taught by paragraph [0098] of Suzuki. However, that section discloses a continuity detector, not a size detector.

Thus, Suzuki fails to disclose the combination of features recited in independent claim 1, including a size detector detecting an isolated dot size and an isolated dot discriminating portion judging, for each pixel of a plurality of pixels included in an image, whether the pixel is a center pixel of an isolated dot, as recited in independent claim 1. Therefore, independent claim 1 is patentable over Suzuki for at least these reasons.

Claims 10-13 are patentable over Suzuki, at least by virtue of their dependence from patentable independent claim 1. Thus, a detailed discussion of the additional distinguishing features recited in these dependent claims is not set forth at this time. Therefore, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claim 2 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Suzuki in view of Sawada, U.S. Patent No. 6,181,437. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 2 is patentable over Suzuki and Sawada at least by virtue of its dependence from patentable independent claim 1. Thus, a detailed discussion of the additional distinguishing features recited in this dependent claim is not set forth at this time. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.


Should any questions arise in connection with this application or should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference with the undersigned would be helpful in resolving any remaining issues pertaining to this application the undersigned respectfully requests that he be contacted at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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